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OUTPOSTS

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VERNON WATKINS

Call it all Names, but do not call it Rest

GO, death, give ground, for none of yours is here.
Weep with no sound, figures around a well.
Here gales knock down the chestnuts year on year,
And block with leaves the entry to the temple.
There the inscription no man's eyes can spell,
Archaic, in the forgotten character.
Sleeps near the nymph the font that christened her,
A shell unfastening to the vanished marvel.

Apart, life suffering in a tale of shadows,
Her patience lives, like light on infants' graves.
Rain drowns their names, the ground is full of echoes,
And there are rainbows buried in her naves.
Night cancels debts, the prince's and the slave's,
And one stays true, though quitted by his fellows.
The winter earth forsaken by the swallows
Rocks through blind storms their nest of cloistered waves.

The seasons' ritual offerings, fruit and leaves,
Die at her feet. Hazel and chestnut dressed
Fall; but her tomb for men no increase gives.
Here for the thirsty no quick vats are pressed.
Yet brings her breathless love light quietest,
Light for the doomed, and for the lost, reprieves,
The ring-dove's changing light, heaven found through olives;
Call it all names, but do not call it rest.

Here where through trees death's voice, all-severing, blows,
Hung with stone tongues, the language of farewell,
Great doors are opened which no hand can close
And wide heaven flies into the bud's cold cell.
So is her sickness her last oracle
Where from its falling we may seed the rose
And her new joy from her remembered sorrows
Which time, being stony, has no tongue to tell.

NOEL WELCH

Portrait of a Poet

To Dod Procter, R.A.

IT must have been so difficult to get him to sit still.
To catch those slight limbs always half turned away
As if eager to be among the trees stretching finely
Along a branch till they are hard with it
Or being thin between the reeds to deceive the wind.
He is in the flight of every bird
And crouches with the fox in his hole
And you require him to be himself
Who is not properly anything for more than an hour together.

His legs could not reach to the floor unless he sat
On the chair's edge but he liked to sit like that
Because, he explained, it made him feel more secure
More on the way to being grown up and comprehending.
Since you have snared him he will be grown up.
He will be you as long as you look at him.
He even manages to clasp his hands or rather holds
With his right hand his left's second finger
But this is not what you want at all.

Tirelessly you wait till a butterfly attracts his gaze
And his eyelids grow sympathetic with its wings
Impotently battering against the window pane
And then correspondingly quiet and reflective in the sun.
The lace curtains stress his brow's extreme gentleness
And you include the china figure of a man and maid
In the top left hand corner. In her hat she wears
A gay blue feather which becomes a thin blue plume of fear
Dubious already in his eyes and perilous in his cerulean veins.

To be a fox, a bird, a reed is not enough.
He must acknowledge the hierarchy of a cup
Be vibrant with the lampshade's silken fringe
And count out his discarded cherry stones
With the exacting and insidious maid
Whose soft skirts assert the underlying frailty of things.
Occasionally he'll still purposely break his toys
But in future something of him will break with them
And like that you painted him.

GEORGE BARKER

Call, Call to me so softly

CALL, call to me so softly over the loud
Oceans between us
That I may hear your spindrift voice beneath
The seas' hyenas.

And tell, tell me again you chiding keep
At your still breast
The loving viper I curl where I sleep,
But never rest.

W. PRICE TURNER

Anniversary

TWO years have turned in their sleep
since this small untidy room
became mentor of vows I keep:
arena of slow doom.

Tonight, awake, two years
sit up and stare, aghast
at what poor score appears
on the target of the past.

Two years lie back in shame
with slight embarrassed cough
that pride and faith aflame
could simply have dozed off.

Back to the dark then, dreams!
The puny dross we grieve
shall strengthen frailler themes
other years may retrieve.

Two years yawn, and stretch
to the years that sigh ahead,
while I, complacent wretch,
muse by my bride in bed.

V. de. S. PINTO

Village Church

COLD April wind buffeted that green hill
Charging the grey Easter heavens
And the little church with the square tower
Besides the rusty yew.

The heavy door shut and there was stillness
And dim light from small perpendicular windows
Filled with garish late Victorian glass.
The Bible lay open on the bright brass eagle,
An eighteenth century memorial tablet
In decorous heroic couplets informed me that his cold remains
Lie here and rest secure from mortal pains.

Set in the opposite wall a rude Saxon
Crucifix dimly proclaimed a primitive faith.
And the font set up in the reign of Charles the Second
And the little lancet windows in the tower
And the old lichened tombstones among the twinkling crocuses—
All were whispering in soft musical tones,
Stay here with the happy past, the quiet dead:
The world of the living is dangerous, whirling, uncertain.

But I said, "No, not I,"
And ran out on the cold hillside
To meet the living wind
And the wild ragged glittering sky.

ANTHONY THWAITE

Bodies and Music

SO we insist the violence of our theme;
And so we must acknowledge our desire,
The recognition of our martyrdom,
The body's rack, the fierce ordeal by fire.
But recognition blinds us when we must
Convince our blood or sanctify our lust.

The strings insist it in their cry of pain,
The harsh coition of the violin:
Music becomes the emblem of disdain
Both of our pleasure and our origin.
Yet still the orchestral limbs flail out and make
A form too strong for our disgust to break.

Lie with me now and hear transmuted sound
Wail in our wilderness of solitude:
Find in its aspiration what we found
Too warm, too close, too savage, and too crude,
Spun from the web of our complexity,
In whose pure blindness we begin to see.

PETER VIERECK

Which Of Us Two?

WHEN both are strong with tenderness, too wild
With oneness to be severance-reconciled;
When even the touch of fingertips can shock
Both to such seesaw mutuality
Of hot-pressed opposites as smelts a tree
Tighter to its dryad than to its own tight bark;
When neither jokes or mopes or hates alone
Or wakes untangled from the other; when
More-warm-than-soul, more-deep-than-flesh are one
In marriage of the very skeleton;—

When, then, soil peels mere flesh off half this love
And locks it from the unstripped half above,
Who's ever sure which side of soil he's on?
Have I lain seconds here, or years like this?
I'm sure of nothing else but loneliness
And darkness. Here's such black as stuffs a tomb,
Or merely midnight in an unshared room.
Holding my breath for fear my breath is gone,
Unmoving and afraid to try to move,
Knowing only you have somehow left my side,

I lie here, wondering which of us has died.

U.S.A.

ALAN BROWNJOHN

Dream Landscape

FROM a secret window with assisting sunlight
We saw it, far in space (as in time always
Seen distantly with the mind's eye, perfect,
Land not obedient to human change).

And you will remember that even then we knew
This time would come, when the same window's
Round showed difference, the clean hills bore
The altered burden of a restless sky.

Strange with the shapes of clouds not seen before.
And though expecting it, fearing to look,
We climbed the staircase to the window's room
And entered. On the familiar chairs

Each of us standing silently, we looked.
We did not tell each other what we saw,
Fools in a dream awake together,
Wishing our guardians had locked the door.

P. J. HELM

Homage to Lydgate

'"Chekemate to beautye," seyth rymplyd age.'
(John Lydgate, 1370-1451.)

TWO shadows couple on the sheet,
The smooth flesh and the wrinkled skin;
Time's eyelid flickers, and the teeth
Corrupt, the cheeks fall in.
"Chekemate to beautye," seyth rymplyd age.

Spliced muscle and disjointed limb
Rest wrist by knuckle on the board,
And while they move the ivory men
Time yawns them into bones.
"Chekemate to beautye," seyth rymplyd age.

ROBERT BELOOF

Hansel,

On his Twenty-Eigth Birthday

ON crumbs that track back to the womb
Minute birds have crammed my doom.

Candles on the cake commence
To be a forest not a fence

And will not whitewash with a hope
Of higher eyes and broader scope.

There is no way but straight ahead,
A relatively circling road,

That leads on through thorn and frost
Back to the place where you were lost.

I do with terror what with joy
I did when but an icing boy

Who not only the delicious earth,
But every waxen year of mirth,

Could in the round and item see.
A subtle forest but no tree

Looms as I respite face, name,
By huffing out the woods of flame

In one tense storm that grants my wish
(Mysterious as burning bush)

To live to add another turn
In a maze I cannot learn.

But soon will come that wrathful day,
From growth of fires and lungs' decay,

When the hurricane of breath
Leaves leaping some few orange teeth

Which burn a clearing in the wood
Where promises, appointments stood,

And though I'll run I cannot come
Within that lost, familiar fame,

But, turning, see my name and face
Vanished in the witch's pen of space.

U.S.A.

ROBIN ATTHILL

Prenzie Angelo

NOT to touch the forbidden, the immitigable tree,
not taste the ferment of the lips' intoxication—
this is the negative of virtue in the heart's compliance,
accessory after the chamois softness of the glove's
flirtation where the hand fears to strike,
the eye's adultery aforethought to the naked
kiss of bodies, and accomplice to the firm
curve of the breast, the breath of scent
inspiring the casual, but deliberate meeting.

See in the glass a prenzie Angelo
who poses yet a cold immaculate body;
no radiologist can read the dark
patch where sin breeds in a waste of spirit.
Here is habitual stealth, the stealth of anger
that eats away delight in a child's gay laughter;
envy, with ill-meant sneer; the lust of selfhood
tumbling the sensual moment while the heart burns
with bitterness of grace forgotten.
Lord, is it I?

Teach us the self-knowledge of confession's mirror;
set free from the mortmain of the will's negation;
forgive us for the sins we have not sinned,
the sourness of the fruits we dare not pick—
like schoolboys lusting with intent to steal
from the forbidden, the immitigable tree.

Three poems by LOUIS DUDEK

The Critics

SOME conspiracy of silence among the trees
makes the young birds secret,
or laughing at our infirmities
in birdlike fashion, they titter in feathers;
and the uncondescending trees,
too wise to speak against us, against streamlining,
against new fashions in uniforms and clothes,
wear always the same drab leaves,
preserve a Sachem silence
toward our puberty rites of golf and war.

Spaces

THE seven stars
of the Great Wain
hang in the sky
a million light years
one from another
and from me, but I
gather the seven together
who could never know
me or one another
but for my human eye.

Apples

FOR ten minutes I could not read,
then knew it was the smell of apples,
two of them on the table
—making the mouth water
over a tract on atomic weapons.
I might have eaten the book.
Then why should not love-bites
sharpen the teeth against your and my extinction?

Canada

MARGARET WILLY

Wrong Wavelength

LULLED by the fire, encircled in comfort and safety,
Complacent we wait the next programme—the listening room
Tuned in, through the babel of swing, news-commentary, crooner;
Then, prickling the flesh, quickening the pulse and the heart-beat,
From some alien world the voice strikes down through the gloom:

"Où es-tu?" Out of an echoing darkness,
Hollow with longing reverberates that cry . . .
Is it God who pursues and pleads with his wayward Adam;
Or man who out there roams the night, hag-ridden and homeless,
His entreaty flung back by a vacant, abandoned sky?

ROY McFADDEN

Notes for Persephone

NOW you have gone too far. I do not grieve
For me, though I have cause to; but look, leave
Aside all but the facts: that you destroyed
A gentle and a gracious thing; employed
The stratagems of power, surprise, deceit,
The brutal breaking fist;—why should I treat
Murder as something else because they say
That you who give can also take away.
Why give at all? You're not a child that makes
A castle out of shell and sand and breaks
It into powder for the fun of it.
Why bother making pieces that will fit
Only to scatter pieces, board and all,
And then astound us with a miracle?
Power has corrupted you; if you are there
At all and not just my reflected stare.

My hand and heart and head and utterance
Are pledged more firmly in allegiance
To those pulled into darkness; for we know
Nothing of death because we fear to throw
Open doors and windows to the night;
Washing reality away with light,
Shouting down silence with our frightened breath.
We shall not live until we talk to death.

JOHN BUTLER

Nightmare

MY thoughts, uneasy shadows, wind
Down echoing stairways of the mind;

Frustrated hopes that clutch the air,
And find a shivering darkness there;

The grey, relentless, hands of pain,
Whose fingers probe and grip the brain;

And there, from furtive corners, peer
The faceless images of fear;

While shameful things, in silence, creep
Around the padded cell of sleep.

FRANCIS NEWBOLD

To the Triple Goddess

MOST ancient Enemy of logic and swords,
anathema to thinker, puritan,
but friend to makers of magic, myths and words;
take to your breast this problem child Man,
out of control these many days;
love him to sleep before he breaks his toys.

ROBERT CONQUEST

The Virtues of Poetry

I READ in passing, or with killing thirst.
I take a draught of freedom or a sip.
The stiff dichotomies may slur and slip,
The faulty neural currents be reversed.

The tongue could be too salty or the tang :
It all dissolved beneath an actual sweetness.
Teaching no law and claiming no completeness,
It opened what we said to what we sang.

For it ignores the false habituation
Which carves life up with language; it will not
Disrupt one brilliance into "think and feel."

"Body and mind" 's a fracture it can heal
In such a rush of luck and liberation
As grips a gambler when the dice are "hot."

ERIC NIXON

Procession of Nuns in a Stormy Spanish Landscape

ATTENUATED by the light
they walk in robes of blue and white
across the southern meadow
where the green flames grow.

Cowled beneath impending storm
they blend the supernatural calm.
Immense as statues and as cool
exhale the quiet of their rule.

Seraphic blue and white of swan
burn in the splendour of the sun;
lily and iris thus endure
sweetly devout, devoutly pure.

Ten Burnt Offerings: Louis MacNeice (Faber, 10s 6d.).
Collected Poems: Dylan Thomas (Dent, 12s. 6d.).

WHEN Mr. MacNeice writes, as he does in one of the less successful offerings, that "this middle stretch of life is bad for poets", he at once draws attention to his own problem. The days when some critics wondered whether he was a journalist writing poetry or a poet writing journalism are over. Here is a poet in the middle stretch of his life feeling unsurely towards some kind of philosophy. The clarity which has for so long been a characteristic has "advanced" to a new obscurity in some of these poems. Part IV of *Areopagus* seems to make unnecessary a good deal of what's gone before, and one wonders if Mr. MacNeice is getting too wordy.

Just because of this, the middle period is important. Gone is the "sunlight on the garden" for its own sake. But his casualness, his ability to take the casual speech and lift it into poetry, his flashes of perception that catch a scene or situation—they are all here more maturely than ever before. His sparkle of imagery, his quick descriptiveness, achieve a fine maturity in *Didymus,* which rises with clarity and power to its last lines. *Death of a Cat* is another magnificently sustained poem which skirts round sentiment and yet ennobles with simple feelings of loss. And the only love poem, *Flowers in the Interval,* seems to me to be MacNeice at his characteristically best—what one expects from the early witty and clever MacNeice, the topographic poet, and the poet of the bright image, at times even extravagant but always confident. But apart from the sureness of his technique, what is chiefly important in this book is the path that Mr. MacNeice is making for himself, in which he finds that our task is set "to become Atlas while we can and bear the world which made us man."

Mr. Dylan Thomas, some seven years younger that Mr. MacNeice, comes to the middle stretch of life with his *Collected Poems,* and "the unmistakable fire and power of genius", to quote the late W. J. Turner. Well, we've got over the Thomas ballyhoo—the exciting tattoo of alliterative syllables, the spindrift magic of imagery—and what's left is still undeniably a true poet, likely a great poet.

The earlier poems show us his dynamic, sexually creative view of the cosmos with its mixture of Biblical influence. And it is emphasized again in the war period. A poem like *Unluckily for a Death* seems to try to resolve the dynamic power of sex, the dualism of death and rebirth, mortal desire and the life of the spirit. If

Thomas has drawn strength from his recollections of childhood in some of his most magnificent poems like *Fern Hill,* the contemplation of death and its significance, which his earlier work had prepared him for, gave a new depth and insight to some of the war poems. All these elements, the joy and terror of childhood, the creative power in the universe, the awareness of death have made him more profoundly religious. The nature poet is still important—"Know the green good,/Under the prayer wheeling moon in the rosy wood . . ." but the autobiographical poet of the superb *Poem in October* is also with us, but with a more religious insight. So that now "He sings towards anguish". . . "And freely he goes lost / In the unknown famous light of great / And fabulous, dear God."

HARDIMAN SCOTT.

An Italian Visit: C. Day Lewis (Cape, 7s. 6d.).

The Black Huntsmen: Irving Layton
Cerberus: Louis Dudek, Irving Layton and Raymond Souster } (Contact Press, Toronto, Canada).

The Roses of Tretower: Roland Matthias (Dockleaves Press, 4s. 6d.).

MR. DAY LEWIS is a very good poet who sometimes achieves greatness, and his record of a voyage of discovery through Italy contains some of the finest poetry he has written to date. He alone of the so-called Auden group has attained a degree of poetic development over the past decade and on the evidence of this volume, with its promise of future progress, stakes a claim to recognition as the group's finest poet.

The sequence opens with a dialogue between the poet's three selves. Tom is the persevering hedonist intent upon enjoyment of the "real, royal, vulgar pageant," and not greatly interested in the exploration of ruins or the elucidation of philosophical trends. Dick is the poet, journeying as "a priest entering into the spirit of dead ceremonial" and striving after a new vision for the present among the glories of the past:

"If I could find that place where nymph and shepherd meet
And the distance melts into deity, I would unearth my buried
Heirlooms, my sealed orders."

Harry is the sceptic, the scientist, the sociologist, the last remnant of the poet's once all-important social conscience, striving to relate all experience to the world of the split atom and racial warfare, for the benefit of a posterity in which he only half believes. The

purpose of the voyage, for all three is discovery. For Tom, discovery of a new sensual experience; for Dick, the discovery of a poetic synthesis of past, present and future; for Harry, discovery of meaning through analysis of the component parts of a chaotic present, against the background of a chaotic past.

The second part of the sequence is a description of the journey by air and is reminiscent of Mr. Day Lewis's earlier work in the 'thirties, though the corners have been rounded by experience and the edges smoothed off, until the reading of these lines makes any reference back an occasion for wonder at the poet's present achievement. There are fine passages in every section, even the fifth, *Florence: Works of Art,* in which the poet has chosen a Florentine painting or sculpture for each of five twentieth-century poets and then composed pastiche poems in the manner in which he believed each poet would respond to own particular work of art. These gems of artifice have been frowned upon by certain critics as detracting from the value of the whole sequence although they do not withhold admiration for Mr. Day Lewis's ingenuity. Such a view results from a misunderstanding of the serious purpose behind the sequence and of the fact that the pastiche poems are not a wilful interruption, an irrelevant interlude, but form an integral part of the whole poem. If the mood is light, the underlying purpose remains essentially serious : an attempt to discover aspects of the present in the peak achievements of the past.

For my part, I would chose the sixth section, *Elegy Before Death: at Settignano,* as containing the best poetry in the book and, indeed, some of the finest lines I have read in the work of a modern poet since the end of the war.

Mr. Irving Layton appears to be the Kenneth Patchen of Canadian poetry. His verse is forceful, crude and savagely satirical, finding its subject matter in the Jewish quarter of Montreal and on the dingy waterfront, among the pimps and prostitutes, the spivs and morons. He has a considerable talent and when he is able to detach himself from the intellectual squalor of his mental surroundings he will begin to write fine poetry. He writes, in a preface to his own section of *Cerberus,* "The Canadian poet is an exile in his own country . . . this most philistine country in the world." Let him gain comfort from the fact that while there are three poets of such potential worth as Louis Dudek, Raymond Souster and himself, there is the nucleus of a cultural underground movement that can win great victories, provided that it keeps it aims unclouded and recognizes the extent of its responsibilities. Mr. Layton can learn a lot from a study of the poetry of his friend, Mr. Dudek, who has

attained a far greater degree of emotional clarity and a more balanced appreciation of the power and responsibilities of the true poet.

From Canada to Wales and the poetry of Mr. Roland Matthias. Despite a certain amount of doom and gloom in the manner of the novels of Caradoc Evans, there is progress and promise in his poetry. As yet he lacks a clear vision of his poetic purpose without which his poetry, competent and readable, cannot gloriously catch fire.

B. Evan Owen.

13 *New Zealand Poets,* edited by Robert Thompson (Handcraft Press, New Zealand).

The Bright Sea: Pat Wilson
Mine Eyes Dazzle: Alistair Campbell
The Falcon Mask: Hubert Witheford
Roughshod Among the Lilies: Louis Johnson

(The Pegasus Press, New Zealand, 3s. 6d. each)

IN HIS Introductory Note to 13 *New Zealand Poets,* Mr. Robert Thompson observes that "most young New Zealand poets don't tend to subscribe to movements or schools, nor do they often move in the same direction; that is to say, there is no unity or community of endeavour as some might expect in a young and geographically isolated country." This is demonstrated perhaps most clearly by the Pegasus booklets than by the slim anthology published by the Handcraft Press, for the simple reason that, as each contains the work of but a single poet, more representative selections are provided and one can, therefore, make fairer comparisons.

It is interesting to examine the different characteristics of these young poets. Mr. Pat Wilson, for instance, appears deliberately to exclude personal emotion from his poetry, contenting himself with evoking the atmosphere of scenes that have been impressed upon his memory, and in some of his sea and sea-coast pieces he does it very well indeed, but in others he descends to mere reportage. Mr. Alistair Campbell's poetry, on the other hand, is largely inspired by strong personal feeling, which he expresses by means of symbols drawn almost exclusively from natural phenomena. His method is seen at its best in the eight poems of the *Elegy.* He has an admirable sense of form, and this, combined with his craftsmanlike technique and use of imagery, promises well for his future development.

The Falcon Mask is Mr. Witheford's second book and it confirms one's first impressions of the author's unusual intellectual powers. There is a cool strength underlying many of these poems which

suggests that a great deal has been held in reserve, though one is not always satisfied that Mr. Witheford has conveyed precisely what he intended.

Most outstanding and certainly most at ease among these New Zealanders is Mr. Louis Johnson, whose subtle irony, extensive range of thought and expert manipulation of words, mark him out at once as a poet of considerable importance. Whatever he chooses to write about, however private the experience or slight the subject which gives him his starting-point, Mr. Johnson is acutely conscious of the human situation and of man's relationship to his environment. There is always a wider background to his work, against which all the individual poems fall into a distinctive pattern.

In 13 *New Zealand Poets,* Kendrick Smithyman, Robert Thompson and Louis Johnson show to greatest advantage, but there are some pleasing poems by Ngaire Outram Hogan, Eve Langley, Willow Macky, W. Hart Smith and Lily Trowern. The Handcraft Press are to be congratulated on their enterprise in producing this collection : it is to be hoped that it will be the first of a long series.

ANTHONY NEWMAN.

The Year One: Kathleen Raine (Hamish Hamilton, 7s. 6d.).
The Dark Side of Love: John Smith (Hogarth Press, 6s. 0d.).
The Fanfarlo: Muriel Spark (Hand & Flower Press, 3s. 6d.).
Walking Under Water: Dannie Abse (Hutchinson, 10s. 6d.).

THERE might be something of a fairy-tale atmosphere about Miss Kathleen Raine's latest book, with its spells and incantations, its wild wind-music and voices in the night, were it not for the fact that it awakens an uncomfortable feeling of recognition, a primitive awareness of intangible presences that cannot be banished merely by closing the book. The truth is, of course, that Miss Raine has reached down to unusual levels of archetypal experience, and it is this depth, camouflaged by the simplicity of her thought and language, which catches the reader unprepared. When she speaks directly, as in *The Instrument* or, more crisply, in *A word Known to the Dead,* she is able to bring us back to the realities of daily life still under the subtle spell she has woven about these delicate poems. *The Year One,* her fourth volume, marks not so much a new development as a more intensive exploration of experiences she has already hinted at previously, and it will undoubtedly add to her growing reputation.

It is in the less ambitious poems, such as *Equal* or *The Next Day After Christmas,* rather than the *Five Etudes* on a time theme or the

poems on classical subjects that Mr. John Smith's genuine talent is most clearly discernible. He writes easily, but is inclined to be diffuse. Nevertheless, for a young poet, his work is remarkably well-polished—perhaps too polished, for one finds little with real edge to it—and of a consistently high standard.

Mrs. Muriel Spark's first volume of poems is, on the other hand, notable for its incisiveness, pungency and wit:

> "The first text is
> The word. The next is
> (Since morals prevent quarrels
> And writers make poor fighters)
> Love your neighbour, meaning
> Your neighbour, let him love
> His neighbour, and he his.
> Who is Everyman, what is he
> That he should stand in lieu of
> A poem? What is Truth true of?
> And what good is a God's-eye-view of
> Anyone to anyone
> But God? . . ."

If one misses the rich, sometimes almost riotous imagery and the intensity of feeling of her earlier poems (and it is to be hoped that these have not been suppressed, but only temporarily held back for separate publication), Mrs. Spark's rare imaginative gifts are distinctly evident in the conception of *The Rout, Against the Transcendentalists,* the *Prologue* and *Epilogue* to a love cycle (which, incidentally, is not included here), *The Fanfarlo* itself and other pieces. A truly individual manner of looking at life and literature, and a novel method of presentation characterize most of the poems in this collection, but it is only when one has thoroughly assimilated the separate poems that one appreciates just how complex are the experiences with which she is concerned. The title-poem, a satirical ballad taking up the greater part of the volume, is an elaboration of certain lines and phrases from Baudelaire's story, *La Fanfarlo,* and aptly demonstrates the author's mastery over the difficult ballad form, though its length tends to weaken its impact. To say that Mrs. Spark has achieved her stated purpose of formally reconciling "the qualities of argument and lyricism" is to understate the real nature of her achievement.

In *Walking Under Water,* Dr. Dannie Abse exhibits a keener sense of discipline than was apparent in his first volume, published a few years ago, but, unlike the development in Mrs. Spark's work,

the change is essentially one of technique rather than of direction. Indeed, he is still very much the romantic, deeply moved by the conditions of his age, conscious of his responsibilities, and expressing himself forcibly when necessary; yet all with far less abandon than before. It is true that he lets his hair down with "Oh the screeching blood! the bedraggled candles! the dead fishes!—where you crucified your sex in tubes . . ." in the poem to Van Gogh and incongruously addresses his subject as "Vincent." It is also true that occasionally he allows his images to pile up until the poem almost collapses under the accumulating weight, as in *The Odour of Nothing*. But these are exceptions, offpourings, as it were, of the creative impulse which provides us with such admirable poems as *Journeys and Faces, Monologue for Prince Hamlet, Epithalamion,* and, above all, *Ordinary Heaven*. The last of these, with its curious insight into the human mind and its skilful handling of intractable material, is probably the best poem he has written. Among the inconsequential and written-to-formula pieces being turned out today it is good to find such a superb attempt as this to deal with realities of a spiritual order.

MORTIMER STEELE.

The Metaphysical Passion: Sona Raiziss (Pennsylvania University Press—London, Geoffrey Cumberlege, 40s. 0d.).
Language as Gesture: R. P. Blackmur (Harcourt, Brace & Co. $5.75).
Literature for an Age of Science: Hyman Levy and Helen Spalding (Methuen, 15s. 0d.).

EACH of these books is concerned with modern poetry: the first specifically concentrating upon its metaphysical elements; the second, wider in scope, evaluating the work of a number of poets, mainly American; the third in attempting to examine various aspects of English literature from a particular standpoint.

More academic in approach than the other authors, Miss Sona Raiziss deals thoroughly with the field she has chosen—the Metaphysical tradition. One of the initial difficulties of such a study as hers is to establish the meaning of "metaphysical" in the sense it is to be employed, for, like "poetry", the "metaphysical" does not easily lend itself to precise definition. After considering some of the many definitions made from time to time, Miss Raiziss contents herself with the conclusion that metaphysical poetry is, broadly, ". . . an attempt . . . to resolve the paradox inherent in any experience by evoking simultaneously its emotional and intellectual powers." If this is not entirely satisfactory in itself, it is more than

adequate for her purpose and it does provide her with an opening for a very knowledgeable and enlightening study of the technical methods involved, since, as she points out, what distinguishes metaphysical poetry is not so much the selection of material as the manner of its presentation. Of particular interest and value are the parallels drawn between the 17th and 20th centuries, and they enable us to gain a much deeper insight into the work of Eliot, Tate, Ransom, Hart Crane, Macleish and other contemporary poets.

Language as Gesture, by Mr. R. P. Blackmur, illustrates both the merits and demerits of the analytical procedure known as "New Criticism." To take the latter first, one finds that so much care is taken in eliciting the exact meaning or meanings, tone, texture, colour and total value of individual words making up the poem that one's attention is diverted from the poem as a whole. Yet it does keep one's eye on the actual text and discourages the woolly thinking and highly subjective interpretation that bear no relation to the poem under discussion. It could hardly have a more competent practitioner than Mr. R. P. Blackmur, who is one of America's most outstanding critics. *Language as Gesture* is a selection of his essays of the last twenty years, and includes studies of Yeats, Pound, Eliot, Emily Dickinson, Wallace Stevens, Hart Crane, Cummings and Marianne Moore. What separates his critical writing from that of others is his peculiar knack of moving steadily, yet disarmingly, straight to the heart of the matter, of tracing the creative impulse back to its source and, in a telling sentence or so, summarizing the discoveries he has made on the way. This is one of the important books to cross the Atlantic and English readers would be well advised to secure a copy, by fair means or foul.

It is appropriate that Professor Hyman Levy and Miss Helen Spalding should have collaborated on the production of *Literature in an Age of Science,* for they are both experts in their respective fields of science and literature. In this volume, in which they examine the functions of poetry, drama and the novel, they succeed in capturing the reader's interest from the first by calling for a new attitude towards the aims of literature, a completely changed outlook analogous to the revolution that has taken place in the realms of science. Writers, they contend, must, like scientists, understand the power they exercise and its effects "for good or ill on society" (one is tempted to challenge some of their naïve assumptions about scientists!). It is disappointing to find that all they advocate is an acceptance of sociological standards of value, which can hardly be called a new outlook.

CARLTON WILLIS.